

CHANGING THE CULTURE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION THROUGH COLLABORATION AND CREATIVITY

Wonder School is a laboratory preschool collaboration between **Columbus State Community College (CSCC)**, **Columbus Museum of Art (CMA)**, and **The Childhood League Center**. Wonder School fosters curiosity and discovery in an arts-rich, child-centered, responsive learning ecosystem for young children and the next generation of early childhood educators.

The mission of the Wonder School is to foster purposeful play, critical inquiry and a collaborative community approach to education—for children, for their educators, and for a more creative, compassionate society.

With approximately 12 children and 20 practicum students from the Columbus State Community College Early Childhood Development & Education program learning through the program in the first year. Wonder School is based at The Childhood League Center at Fort Hayes and throughout the entire Columbus Museum of Art, including its collections, exhibitions, the Chase Center for Creativity, sculpture garden and grounds. Anchored in child-led and constructivist pedagogy, Wonder School children participate in interest-driven experiential learning that provides opportunities for project work, self-expression and multiple avenues of learning through the arts. The objectives of the Wonder School include:

- Preschool children learning in a child-centered, arts rich environment that emphasizes documentation and reflection which aligns with Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards and Developmentally Appropriate Practice.
- Pre-service teachers learning in a lab school that is grounded in best practices for early childhood education.
- On-going documentation, assessment and evaluation that is mutually beneficial to CMA and CSCC and aimed at continuous improvement and dissemination of findings to benefit the field of early learning as a whole.



Why Wonder School?

Research has long shown that early learning is key to long-term success both academically and interpersonally, yet access to high-quality early learning remains a significant national challenge. A 2015 study from the Peabody Research Institute emphasized the critical role of quality when it found that low-quality, underfunded early education was more harmful in the long-run than none at all. Ohio has embraced this focus on quality through the Step Up to Quality program, and connections to public funding. Grounded in best practices, located in Columbus's vibrant "Creative Campus," and offering opportunities for pre-service and current preschool teachers to learn from and with each other, the Wonder School will advance quality early learning across the community and beyond. This bold, nationally-unique model will reinforce Columbus's reputation as an "Intelligent Community" and a site of innovation and creativity.



At a glance: Wonder School will

- Be housed one day a week at CMA and three days a week at The Childhood League Center campus at Ft. Hayes
- Educate young children and the next generation of their teachers alongside one another, starting with 12-15 children and more than 50 CSCC early childhood studies students learning from the program each semester
- Be the first partnership of its kind in the country

Wonder School will impact the *Landscape of Early Childhood in Columbus—present and future*

As a lab school, the Wonder School will provide professional development opportunities and training for students from CSCC's early childhood department. As well as providing training for pre-service teachers, Wonder School will also be a hub to train and connect preschool teachers already in the classroom, supporting them to continue their learning and share their knowledge.

Children of Columbus

After the pilot year, Wonder School will transition to a sliding-scale tuition model, enabling low-income families to be part of this special learning ecosystem.

Combined with professional development series to spread these research-based, child-centered practices, Wonder School will directly impact a growing portion of the community.

Families of Columbus

Making a lasting difference for a child means engaging the adults in their lives. Wonder School will strengthen parents' and caregivers' connections to learning, providing Museum memberships to each family, and creating a suite of activities for adults to support lifelong learning and foster caregivers' abilities to nurture creative learning.

For more information, please contact Caitlin Lynch, Lead Teaching Artist and Coordination for Young Child Programming at the Columbus Museum of Art, Caitlin.Lynch@cmaohio.org



Lipsey, M. W., Farran, D.C., & Hofer, K. G., (2015). *A Randomized Control Trial of the Effects of a Statewide Voluntary Prekindergarten Program on Children's Skills and Behaviors through Third Grade* (Research Report). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University, Peabody Research Institute.